

United States v. Narcisa Veliz Novack, et al.

**Prepared Remarks of U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara
July 8, 2010**

Good afternoon. My name is Preet Bharara, and I am the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

On July 12, 2009, a 53-year-old man was brutally beaten, cut, bound, and killed in his suite at the Hilton Rye Town Hotel, just over five miles from here, while overseeing an Amway convention. That man was Ben Novack, Jr., a Florida businessman, and son of the founder of the famed Fontainebleau resort hotel in Miami Beach. In the weeks and months following Novack's death, news accounts and speculation swirled around his slaying.

Today, just four days short of the one year anniversary of this heinous crime, we announce the indictment of four of the individuals allegedly responsible for the homicide of Ben Novack. They are:

- Narcisa Novack, Ben Novack's wife;
- Cristobal Veliz, Mrs. Novack's brother;
- Denis Ramirez, a relative of Cristobal Veliz, and
- Joel Gonzalez, another alleged co-conspirator.

Narcisa, or “Narcy,” Novack was arrested in Fort Lauderdale early this morning. She appeared in Federal District Court in Southern Florida today and was detained. Cristobal Veliz and Denis Ramirez were arrested early this morning in Brooklyn, New York, and both will be arraigned before a Magistrate Judge in White Plains later today. Joel Gonzalez remains at large, and we are actively seeking his capture.

Based on our longstanding, productive working relationship, earlier this year, Westchester County District Attorney Janet DiFiore approached my office to work together on this important case. Since that time, investigators and prosecutors from the Westchester County DA’s office and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York have worked together tirelessly to solve this crime. I want to personally thank Janet DiFiore for her unwavering commitment to the pursuit of justice in this case, and in so many other cases we have worked on together.

I would also like to commend the outstanding work of the prosecutors responsible for this case:

- From my office: Assistant United States Attorneys Elliott Jacobson, Jeff Alberts, and Jason Hernandez, and Chief Diane Gujarati of the White Plains Division and Chief Sharon Cohen Levin of the Asset Forfeiture Unit.

- From DA DiFiore's office: Assistant District Attorneys Perry Perrone and Fredric Green, Paula Branca-Santos, and their supervisors, Assistant District Attorneys Maryanne Luciano, James McCarty, and Patricia Walsh.

I would also like to thank:

- George Venizelos, Acting Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI in New York
- Chief Greg Austin of the Rye Brook Police Department, and
- George Longworth, Commissioner of the Westchester County Department of Public Safety, all of whom are with me here today, for their leadership roles in this investigation.

In addition, I would like to thank the New York State Police and our law enforcement partners in Florida. I would also like to specifically recognize the investigators in the trenches who painstakingly gathered the evidence that led to today's charges:

- FBI Special Agent John Sullivan;
- Rye Brook Detective Sergeant Terrence Wilson;
- Westchester County Detectives William Hess, Terry Malone, and Ken Schaeffer; and
- Westchester District Attorney's Office Investigators Ed Murphy, Michael LaRotonda, Art Muhammad, and Richard Morra.

Now, let me take a minute to describe the federal charges we have unsealed today.

As alleged in the Indictment, the plot that led to the brutal death of Ben Novack was a family affair.

The Indictment alleges that beginning on Thursday, July 9, 2009, Narcy Novack and her husband Ben, were at the Hilton Hotel in Rye Brook, New York, on a business trip.

Unbeknownst to Ben Novak, his own wife and her team of co-conspirators were allegedly about to conduct their own deadly business in Rye Brook.

On July 7, two days before Narcy and Ben arrived at the Rye Brook Hilton, Narcy's brother Cristobal allegedly drove with co-conspirators from Florida to New York. On July 10, 2009, Joel Gonzalez and another co-conspirator allegedly scouted the hotel in preparation for the attack on Ben Novack.

As charged in the Indictment, two days later, on the morning of Sunday, July 12, 2009, Denis Ramirez drove Gonzalez and another co-conspirator to the hotel. When they arrived, the Indictment alleges the following:

- Narcy Novack was there;
- She opened the door to the hotel suite for the attackers;
- Gonzalez and a co-conspirator then allegedly beat, cut, and bound Ben Novack;
- And during that assault, Narcy Novack allegedly went so far as to provide the attackers with a pillow to place over her husband's face as he was being beaten to death.

And today, because of the cooperative efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement, Narcy Novack, Cristobal Veliz, Denis Ramirez, and Joel Gonzalez stand charged in connection with Ben Novack's death. Specifically, the defendants are charged with conspiracy to commit interstate domestic violence and other crimes. These serious federal crimes carry sentences of up to life imprisonment for each of the defendants.

In addition to the Indictment, we are taking one other important step in this case. Later today this Office intends to file a civil forfeiture complaint seeking to forfeit all property in the Estate of Ben Novack and proceeds from Ben Novack's life insurance policy (\$1 million). These properties include:

- Several homes in Florida
- A number of bank accounts
- An assortment of boats and vintage automobiles
- And a valuable memorabilia collection

Through this forfeiture action, the Government seeks to prevent Nancy Novak from acquiring that property, which is valued at between \$5 million and \$6 million dollars, as proceeds of her alleged participation in the savage killing of her husband.

1. Today's takedown would not have been possible without the true partnership my Office enjoys with the Westchester County DA's Office. And it is my pleasure now to introduce that office's leader, Janet DiFiore;
2. George Venizelos, Acting Director-in-Charge of New York Field Office;
3. Greg Austin, Chief of the Rye Brook Police Department; and
4. George Longworth, Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety for Westchester County Police Department